

IN THE CLAIMS:

1-20. (CANCELLED)

21. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A method of differentiating between the presence of a human occupant and a child restraint seat in a motor vehicle, said method comprising the steps of;

sensing tension exerted on a seat belt with a sensor fixed along said the seat belt; wherein the sensor includes a tensile section disposed between two belt loop sections, the tensile section including a strain gauge for sensing force on the seat belt;

communicating the magnitude of the sensed tension to a controller;

comparing the magnitude of tension to a predetermined tension; and

determining that a child restraint seat is present if the sensed tension is greater than the predetermined tension.

22. (ORIGINAL) The method of claim 21, wherein the motor vehicle includes an air bag system, and further includes the step of disabling deployment of the air bag system upon determining the presence of the child restraint seat.

23. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The method of ~~claim 22~~ claim 21, wherein the predetermined tension is further defined as the tension that is normally not tolerable for human occupants and that which is normally exerted to secure a child restraint seat in place.

24-26. (CANCELLED)

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27. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The assembly of claim 24, A method of differentiating between the presence of a human occupant and a child restraint seat in a motor vehicle, said method comprising the steps of:

sensing tension exerted on a seat belt with a sensor disposed along said seat belt, wherein said sensor assembly comprises at least three prongs extending from a common beam, said prongs attached to said seat belt without modification of the seat belt;

communicating the magnitude of the sensed tension to a controller;

comparing the magnitude of tension to a predetermined tension; and

determining that a child restraint seat is present if the sensed tension is greater than the predetermined tension..

28. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The assemblymethod of claim 27, wherein a strain gauge is disposed on one of said prongs to generate a force signal representative of a force exerted on the seat belt

29. (NEW) The method as recited in claim 27, including the step of disabling deployment of an air bag system in response to determination that a child restraint seat is present.

30. (NEW) A method of operating an occupant restraint system comprising the steps of:

- a) determining a tension on a seat belt having first and second intermediate ends disposed, with a sensor including a tensile portion supported between the first and second intermediate ends;
- b) comparing an actual tension determined by the sensor with a predetermined tension; and
- c) determining that a child restraint device is present responsive to said actual tension being greater than said predetermined tension.

31. (NEW) The method as recited in claim 30 wherein the occupant restraint system includes an air bag and the method includes the step of disabling deployment of the airbag responsive to determining that a child restraint device is present.

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32. (NEW) The method as recited in claim 30, wherein the sensor includes first and second attachment portions for securing the sensor to the first and second intermediate ends of the seat belt.

33. (NEW) The method as recited in claim 32, wherein the sensor includes a strain gauge supported on the tensile portion between the first and second attachment portions.

34. (NEW) The method as recited in claim 30, wherein the seat belt includes a first end portion and a second end portion and the first and second intermediate ends are disposed between the first end portion and the second end portion.